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SUBJECT: CHAVEZ'S ANTI-IMPERIALIST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

REF: CARACAS 3639

Classified By: Stephen G. McFarland, Deputy Chief of Mission,  
for Reasons 1.4(b).

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Summary  
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1. (C) President Hugo Chavez visited Spain, Libya, Russia, Iran, and Qatar during November 23-30 as part of what GOV officials called an "international offensive" to promote the new phase of the Bolivarian Revolution. In Spain, Chavez capitalized on Foreign Minister Moratino's assertion that the Aznar administration supported the April 2002 coup against Chavez. In Libya, Muammar Qadhafi awarded Chavez a human rights award. In Russia, Chavez told reporters of plans to purchase Russian weapons and other military equipment "to confront any aggression." He also accused the United States of "having its hands" in the electoral crisis in Ukraine. In Iran, President Ali Khatami praised Chavez for carrying out a revolution without violence and for resisting unilateralism in international affairs. End summary.

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Chavez Meets World  
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2. (C) President Hugo Chavez's trip to five countries was billed by the GOV as a chance to generate new commercial deals and to share Chavez's visions of a "multipolar world." Chavez visited Spain (11/22-23), Libya (11/24), Russia (11/25-26), Iran (11/27-29), and Qatar (11/30), a 50,000-mile tour that Chavez claimed marked a new era in Venezuelan diplomacy. At each stop, Chavez touted his August 15 "re-legitimation" in the recall vote, denounced U.S. coup-plotting and imperialism, and called for a worldwide movement of "popular democracy." Traveling with Chavez during all or parts of the trip were Foreign Minister Ali Rodriguez, Minister of Defense Gen. Jorge Garcia Carneiro, Minister of Commerce and Production Wilmar Castro, Minister of Communications Andres Izarra, and Minister of Agriculture Arnoldo Marquez.

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Spain: All Is Forgiven, And There Is Much To Forgive  
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3. (U) Chavez arrived in the wake of Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos' assertion a few days earlier that the administration of Jose Maria Aznar had supported the temporary ousting of Chavez during April 2002. Chavez dismissed it as water under the bridge, but added that he has no doubts Moratinos' comments are true. Chavez claimed that when the government of Pedro Carmona was briefly installed during his absence, "the Spanish Ambassador in Caracas was the only ambassador, together with U.S. Ambassador, to recognize the tyrant." Aznar's Partido Popular rebuked Chavez for overstepping his bounds during a diplomatic visit. Chavez later told a group of union leaders that if the U.S. were to act militarily against Venezuela, not only Venezuelans but millions of Latin Americans would rebel against it.

4. (U) During the visit to Spain, Chavez proposed the formation of a "Revolutionary Democratic International" similar to the Socialist International. He said workers must free themselves from partisan connections and work toward "social justice." Chavez proposed a binational fund to help solve the debt problems of Latin American countries. Chavez also brought a delegation of businessmen, including some from the opposition, according to press reports, for commercial events with the Spanish private sector. He highlighted investment opportunities in the Venezuelan oil sector as well as ongoing projects undertaken by the Spanish oil company Repsol. Chavez, however, failed to show at a scheduled event at Spanish business confederation. According to press reports, many disgusted Spanish businessmen walked out rather than listen to his substitute, Trade Minister Castro. (Chavez later dined with King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofia on November 30, which Chavez described as the "broche de oro"

("cherry on the sundae") of his trip.)

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Libya: Dr. Chavez Wins Qadhafi Prize  
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15. (U) In Libya, Chavez received the Muammar Qadhafi Prize for Human Rights for his "tireless fight for liberty, justice, and the economic and political emancipation of his people and of all of Latin America." (Previous winners from Latin America include Fidel Castro and Evo Morales.) Former Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega presented the award to Chavez, according to GOV press. Chavez dedicated his award to the memory of deceased Palestinian leader Yassir Arafat and slain Venezuelan prosecutor Danilo Anderson. Chavez also received an honorary doctorate from the "Academy of Popular Thought," which is the first such award granted to a head of state, according to official Libyan media. Chavez did not divulge the details of his two meetings with Qadhafi, but praised the Libyan leader as a "friend and brother" who shares his thesis regarding the development of institutions to help the poor.

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Russia: Bullets, Ballots, and Barrels  
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16. (U) After a working lunch with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chavez told reporters that Venezuela is modernizing and strengthening its armed forces to "confront any aggression." He added that the GOV is in discussion with the GOR to purchase 40 helicopters, 100,000 automatic weapons, and a "large quantity of anti-tank and air defense weapons." Speaking about the Ukrainian electoral crisis, Chavez said one can feel the hand of Washington behind it... If there were elections on the moon or Mars, the United States would be there." Chavez signed a joint declaration with Putin on a range of bilateral and multilateral issues. The declaration included a Russian congratulations to Chavez for winning the recall referendum in an atmosphere of complete respect for the constitution, and with the endorsement of "prestigious international observers."

17. (U) During a petroleum event in Russia, Chavez said the current OPEC price band of USD22-28 is no longer feasible, suggesting a new floor of USD30/bbl. Venezuela state oil company PDVSA also reportedly signed a memo of understanding with Lukoil for increased cooperation in oil exploration and refinery. Chavez told Russian oil firms they would be welcome to come and invest in Venezuela. International press reports said the two leaders also signed an agreement supporting Russia's accession to the WTO.

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Iran: Standing Against Unilateralism  
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18. (U) In his meeting with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, Chavez extolled the Iranian Revolution, which had in 30 years a technological, social and political leap, "just at the Chinese did, and just as we are just beginning to do." Khatami praised Chavez for carrying out a revolution that relies on people rather than military or force, according to press reports. Khatami said he shared Chavez's position of opposing unilateralism in the international community.

19. (U) Chavez said one of the most notable achievements of this his fourth trip to Iran is that Venezuelan para-statal industrial corporation CVG and an Iranian state enterprise would enter into a joint venture under which Iranian tractor components would be assembled in Venezuela. Chavez also said the GOV had agreed to buy 486 tractors direct from Iran that will be financed by PDVSA. Chavez hoped to acquire Iranian technology for irrigation systems as well. The two also agreed to cooperation in communications which would have the Iranians assisting with the installation of "TVSUR," Chavez's proposal for a South American television station. Iran will also help Venezuela improve its domestic production of television programming. On petroleum, Foreign Minister Rodriguez said he plans to have several meetings with GOI officials in December to finalize an agreement on petrochemicals.

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Comment  
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110. (C) We think Chavez's goals were:

-- showcase Venezuela's ability to deal with a broad swath of countries and leaders, building on post-referendum momentum;  
-- burnish Chavez's credentials as an independent who can challenge the U.S. and represent the oppressed; and  
-- advance various energy, commercial, and arms deals.

111. (C) How he did:

-- In Spain, Fonmin Moratinos criticized the Aznar government and the USG for supporting the 2002 coup. His rapprochement with Spain may prove important as the EU assesses its policy toward Venezuela and Cuba.

-- In Russia, he completed commercial deals and pushed oil investment.

-- In Libya, he came off rather foolish as he accepted the Gaddafi human rights prize.

-- In Iran and Qatar, he apparently continued oil, gas, and other commercial cooperation.

-- Throughout the trip, Chavez ripped into the USG, choosing themes (need for multi-polarity etc.) that would resonate with the audience and that would boost Chavez's leadership and his vision for a hemisphere with reduced U.S. influence and participation.  
Brownfield

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